



FELINE ASTHMA

Fact sheet 46

Introduction

Asthma, a medical problem characterised in humans by wheezing and difficulty breathing is a common condition and one which is familiar to most of us. The problem is triggered by an allergic reaction to a substance known as an inhaled allergen, often pollen or air pollutants. Cats can also suffer from the same condition, which is sometimes referred to by vets as allergic bronchitis or eosinophilic bronchitis rather than as asthma. It is the most common cause of coughing in cats. Most cases are mild, but acute flare ups may be life-threatening and need prompt treatment. Siamese and Burmese cats appear to be far more prone to this condition than other breeds.

Signs and Symptoms

Coughing, particularly a chronic cough, is the main symptom, which is seen in affected cats. This is very typically a dry sounding cough with the cat showing a characteristic stance with neck stretched out and head low down to the floor. Each cough is followed in quick succession by another and gives the appearance that the cat may be trying to retch or gag. Sometimes it may appear that the cat is going to be sick or bring up a fur ball. There are a number of other signs, which are commonly seen. These include wheezing, fast or rapid breathing, difficulty breathing and exercise intolerance. The symptoms arise as a consequence of mucus accumulating in the airways, together with swelling of the airways and airway spasm. As a result of these changes, the airways narrow and air flow is reduced leading to breathing problems.

Feline asthma is triggered by a response to inhaled allergens commonly pollens, house dust, dust from cat litter, human dander, scents, smoke and possibly other airborne particulate matter. The condition can become chronic in nature leading to poor general health, poor appetite and in extreme cases, weight loss. However the signs may come and go with symptom free periods interspersed with severe bouts of coughing.

Diagnosing Asthma

If you think that your cat may have asthma you should arrange to see your vet so that the symptoms can be investigated to confirm the diagnosis. Examining your cat and listening to the chest is often enough to diagnose the condition. However X-rays may also be carried out to rule out other respiratory or cardiac problems. Examining the airways with a flexible tube called a bronchoscope may also be carried out in some patients. This has the advantage of being able to see what is happening in the airways and allowing sample collection for analysis at the same time. However in cats, the airways are small and the technique is often difficult to perform.

Treatment

Acute bouts need prompt veterinary treatment with steroids or bronchodilators. Additionally the most severely affected cats will need to be hospitalised, as they may need treatment in an oxygen tent. Most chronic cases can be managed with steroids sometimes with the addition of bronchodilators or even antibiotics if there is a chest infection.

Supportive measures involve removing or minimising (as far as practically possible) exposure to allergens known to trigger the problem and allowing the cat to rest in a stress free environment.

How Denes can help

Some of the natural products we have in our range can provide additional support, especially in chronic cases and can work effectively alongside any medication prescribed by your vet.

Garlic

Garlic is one of the main herbal remedies that can help with respiratory problems. This action is largely due to the effect of the volatile oil present in garlic. For the most part, this is excreted through the lungs and the rest of the respiratory tract, making garlic an excellent remedy for treating respiratory problems in general. Garlic can help with bronchitis, pneumonia, emphysema as well as bacterial or viral infections such as cat flu. One of the most important roles of garlic, however, is in dealing with accumulations of catarrh and mucus. This valuable effect can be employed in treating allergic based respiratory conditions such as chronic feline asthma as well as other respiratory problems such as sinusitis or rhinitis where catarrh or mucus is a feature.

- **Denes Garlic Tablets** are available in pots of 50, 100 or 400 tablets

Homeopathic remedies

Homeopathy provides a safe and viable alternative to helping with chronic cases. From the Denes range of remedies the following can be of value:

- Denes **Arsenicum album 30c** drops where wheezing is the main symptom and where the cat is slightly nervous and sensitive to cold weather.
- Denes **Phosphorus 30c** drops where the cat is friendly and affectionate in nature as well as being generally thirsty.

Other useful fact sheets to read include:

- Garlic
- Homeopathy

If you have any queries concerning your pet's health or feeding problems, you can contact us for free pet care advice by:

- Visiting our website www.denes.com
- Emailing us at info@denes.com
- Calling us on **01273 325364** Mon-Fri, 9am – 12Noon
- Writing to us at:
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